

Message Text

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PASS WHITE HOUSE (KATHY CADE) FROM LEWINE

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OVIP, (CARTER, ROSALYNN)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL VISIT - BRIEFING PAPER

1. THE ISSUE OF FAMILY PLANNING IS BOUND TO COME UP IN MRS. CARTER'S INTERVIEW WITH THE INDIAN PRESS AND PERHAPS WITH AMERICAN PRESS AS WELL.
2. P.M. DESAI, IN A POSTER, "PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE", THAT IS DISPLAYED AT THE ENTRANCE TO RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN, URGES SUPPORT OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE'S DECEMBER 15-31 "NATIONAL FAMILY WELFARE FORTNIGHT". HE SAYS: "FAMILIES MAKE THE NATION. IF FAMILIES ARE LARGE AND UNWIELDY, UNABLE TO TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES, THEY CANNOT EXPECT TO LEAD HAPPY LIVES. THE WORST SUFFERERS OF THIS SITUATION ARE CHILDREN WHO ARE DENIED PROPER GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES AND MOTHERS WHOSE HEALTH IS UNDERMINED BECAUSE OF FREQUENT PREGNANCIES. ALL THE INVESTMENT THAT WE ARE MAKING TODAY IN VARIOUS AREAS OF NATIONAL PROGRESS IS DESIGNED, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF OUR LIVES. THE FAMILY WELFARE PROGRAM IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE INVESTMENT. I DO HOPE THAT OUR PEOPLE WILL UNDERSTAND THE PROGRAM IN ITS PROPER PERSPECTIVE AND WILL ACCEPT IT WITHOUT RESERVATION".

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3. GIVEN THE CONTROVERSIES OVER THE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM DURING THE EMERGENCY, THE PRESS WILL PROBABLY PICK UP THE FACT THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS CHOSEN TO SUPPORT THE PROGRAM IN SUCH A VISIBLE MANNER - WITH ALL DUE EMPHASIS ON VOLUNTARISM, OF COURSE.

4. FOLLOWING IS A BACKGROUND BRIEFING PAPER ON FAMILY PLANNING IN INDIA: BEGIN TEXT INDIA'S POPULATION CURRENTLY IS ESTIMATE AT 625 MILLION (AN 80 PERCENT INCREASE IN THE 30 YEARS SINCE INDEPENDENCE). IT IS GROWING AT A RATE OF A LITTLE OVER TWO PERCENT PER ANNUM. AT THIS RATE, THE POPULATION WILL DOUBLE IN THE NEXT 30-35 YEARS AND CROSS THE ONE BILLION MARK BEFORE THE YEAR 2000.

5. INDIA WAS FIRST AMONG THE COUNTRIES IN THE FREE WORLD TO LAUNCH AN OFFICIAL FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM IN 1952. THE PROGRAM, HOWEVER, BEGAN TO GATHER MOMENTUM ONLY AFTER 1966 WHEN A SEPARATE DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY PLANNING, WITH A SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED BUDGET, WAS ESTABLISHED WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING.

6. THE MARKED INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF STERILIZATIONS FROM 1966-75 (17 MILLION AS COMPARED TO ABOUT FIVE MILLION DURING THE PERIOD 1952-65) WAS STILL NOT SUFFICIENT TO ACHIEVE THE GOI'S BIRTH RATE REDUCTION GOALS. THEREFORE, A NEW POPULATION POLICY WAS ANNOUNCED IN APRIL 1976 -- DURING THE EMERGENCY PERIOD -- TO BOOST THE PROGRAM FURTHER. IN ADDITION TO INCREASING THE MONETARY INCENTIVES FOR STERILIZATION, THE NEW POLICY SOUGHT TO INTRODUCE A VARIETY OF NEW MEASURES INCLUDING RAISING THE LEGAL AGE FOR MARRIAGE FOR BOTH BOYS AND GIRLS. WHILE THE POLICY RULED OUT CENTRAL LEGISLATION FOR COMPULSORY STERILIZATION, IT LEFT THE OPTION OPEN TO THE STATE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GOVERNMENTS. ONLY MAHARASHTRA PASSED SUCH LEGISLATION, BUT IT WAS NOT APPROVED BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA AND, THEREFORE, DID NOT BECOME LAW.

7. THE POPULATION POLICY RECEIVED UNPRECEDENTED POLITICAL SUPPORT FROM THE RULING CONGRESS PARTY. VIRTUALLY ALL STATE GOVERNMENTS ANNOUNCED THEIR OWN SCHEMES OF INCENTIVES AND DIS-INCENTIVES TO PROMOTE FAMILY PLANNING ACCEPTANCE, PARTICULARLY STERILIZATIONS. FOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES THESE SCHEMES RANGED FROM PREFERENCE IN THE MATTER OF ALLOTMENT OF GOVERNMENT HOUSING, LAND, LICENSES AND SPECIAL SALARY INCREMENTS AND CASH AWARDS FOR STERILIZATION ACCEPTORS, TO THE DENIAL OF A HOST OF GOVERNMENT BENEFITS AND FACILITIES, SUCH AS EDUCATION ALLOWANCE FOR CHILDREN, HOUSING, LEAVE TRAVEL CONCESSION, HEALTH AND MATERNITY BENEFITS, ETC., FOR NON-ACCEPTORS. STERILIZATION "QUOTAS" (TARGETS) WERE ASSIGNED TO NEARLY ALL GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONARIES FROM REVENUE OFFICIALS TO SCHOOL TEACHERS. NONFULFILLMENT OF QUOTAS ATTRACTED PUNITIVE MEASURES SUCH AS DENIAL OF STEP INCREASES AND TRANSFER TO REMOTE AREAS.

8. THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF ALL THESE MEASURES WAS AN IN-

CREASE IN STERILIZATION FROM 2.6 MILLION IN 1975 TO OVER EIGHT MILLION

IN 1976. THE NUMBER OF CONDOM USERS ROSE FROM 2.5 MILLION TO 3.3 MILLION AND LEGAL ABORTIONS FROM 150,000 TO 200,000 DURING THE SAME PERIOD. (THE PILLS ARE NOT WIDELY USED IN INDIA.)

9. BY THE END OF 1976, CASES OF "FORCED" STERILIZATIONS AND WIDESPREAD PUBLIC RESISTANCE WERE REPORTED FROM MANY STATES. THE COERCIVE ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM WAS A MAJOR ISSUE IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS HELD IN MARCH 1977, WHICH RESULTED IN THE DEFEAT OF THE CONGRESS PARTY.

10. THE NEW JANATA GOVERNMENT'S POPULATION POLICY RETAINS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SEVERAL FEATURES OF THE OLD ONE, INCLUDING HIGHER MONETARY INCENTIVES FOR STERILIZATION, BUT ELIMINATES ALL FORMS OF COMPULSION AND DISINCENTIVES. FAMILY PLANNING IS TO BE PROMOTED AS A PURELY VOLUNTARY PROGRAM AND MADE AN INTEGRAL PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM COVERING HEALTH, NUTRITION, MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH, ETC. ALL CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS ARE TO BE GIVEN EQUAL IMPORTANCE.

11. AS A RESULT, THE RATE OF STERILIZATIONS HAS PLUMMITED IN RECENT MONTHS, FALLING WELL BELOW PRE-1975 LEVELS, AND THERE HAS BEEN NO INCREASE IN THE ACCEPTORS OF OTHER METHODS. FAMILY PLANNING HAS VIRTUALLY COME TO A STANDSTILL IN MANY STATES, PARTICULARLY IN THE NORTH.

12. THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S POPULATION POLICY HAS RETAINED THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT'S GOALS OF REDUCING THE COUNTRY'S BIRTH RATE FROM 35 PER THOUSAND IN 1976 TO 30 PER THOUSAND BY 1979 AND 25 PER THOUSAND BY 1984. OBVIOUSLY, IF THE CURRENT TRENDS CONTINUE, THESE GOALS WILL NOT BE MET. END TEXT.
GOHEEN

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